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THE ART OF HOME DECORATION.—III.— MINOR FURNISHINGS.

BY WILLIAM R. BRADSHAW.



SCENIC effects obtained by the use of minor furnishings is a subject that has received great attention of late years. A great fault in the use of ornamental articles is the almost universal tendency to use too many of them, so that our interiors appear more like furniture bazaars than dwelling places. The aim in composing a room is to make the various belongings conform to a fixed plan of material and color. A measure of order and simplicity must be secured in the arrangement of our furnishings, or else they will appear a mere conglomeration of pictures, furniture and textiles that lose their original beauty through false contrast. The home feeling is not assured with an arrangement like this, and the home feeling is more to be prized than the mere announcement of valuable possessions.

In art objects, that are at the same time useful, lamps take the lead. These range from the most tiny of fairy lamps that might be covered with a teacup to the massive and elaborate styles in brass, wrought iron, brass and onyx, piano and reading lamps. Hall lanterns and lamps for alcoves or fretwork recesses, whether of iron or decorative brass work, are extremely elegant and useful. In table lamps there is almost endless variety, and a range of styles that will meet the tastes and ideas of all conditions and classes of people. The bodies of some are made of chased and engraved brass, or of silver oxidized and engraved, some of the latter being elegant in the extreme. Other lamps have delicate patterns in brass flagee with trellis and floral ornamentation, enclosing vases of glass or porcelain that makes them interesting studies in art metal work, as well as useful articles. Wrought iron lamps are possibly the most novel, and are brought out in many unique and pretty shapes.

Lamps of Doulton, Sèvres and Dresden are mounted with burners which seem to have reached absolute perfection. Many of these lamps produce a light that is in many respects the equal of the electric light, being almost incandescent.

The five o'clock tea is not nearly so great an institution as formerly, but it has resulted in the production of many graceful and useful forms of metal standards and fancy tables which are necessary to the equipment of the modern reception room, such as tables being pleasantly original in design, and having a flavor of the quaint and unusual, constitute a prominent characteristic of artistic housefurnishing.

Bric-a-brac pedestals are usually adopted in the furnishing of all corners and entrances, and are used for the exhibition of artistic porcelain or bronze statuettes. They should never be placed anywhere in the center of the room, and when surmounted by a palm growing in a dainty jar they form a desirable addition to the appointments of the modern drawing-room.

The practice of hanging oil and water color paintings, engravings and photographs is a legitimate ornamentation of walls. It is not necessary that they should be placed quite close together. It is a better plan to separate them by such small objects as sconces, or little wooden brackets supporting statues and so on. There are pretty Venetian mirrors, artistic in outline, whose frames are made of wood covered with colored velvet, which may be studded at its edges with nails. The best method of hanging pictures is to divide the wall space into different sized rectangular panels by means of flat mouldings, and fill each space with a suitable picture. This is a very good sys-

tem for hanging water colors, etchings and engravings, and is quite artistic. All the spaces need not be filled with pictures, some being decorated with stenciled ornament.

The increasing use of the open fire-place is a healthy sign of the times, whether regarded from a sanitary or artistic point of view, although our winters are almost too cold for such a method of heating. More healthy than either the stove or basement furnace, it gives occasion for the display of decorative metal work, which is one of the most active of modern furnishing tendencies. The open fire-place means, of course, a tiled hearth, with its accompaniment of fender, fire irons and fire screen. Fenders and fire screens are often made to match in design, a very beautiful combination being designed in brass with rondels or bull's-eyes of colored glass, which produces an excellent effect. Fire screens of colored glass, made in brass framework, having panels of enamelled glass with Persian or Japanese designs, are exceedingly decorative.

In chinaware, apart from the necessary articles of household use, we may mention majolica, old Chelsea, Derby, Worcester, Plymouth; Rookwood and other American china; and there are rare specimens of ancient work, some of which are worth their weight in gold, exhibiting as they do the principles of good art applied not only to articles of mere luxury, but to purposes of utility.

In glass we may mention the American crystal glassware as one of the most famous products. There is also the Bohemian and Venetian glass of the present century as being extraordinarily beautiful, both in form and color. In Venetian table glass we have water bottles, claret jugs, liquor glasses, preserve jars, flower stands, vases, etc., wonderfully light in weight, splendid in color, picturesque in appearance, and cheap enough to compare with any table glass that has pretensions to artistic merit. The principal colors used are bottle green, ruby, amber, olive and aquamarine, a very pretty sea blue tint, and the opal glass, which transmits the lovely iridescent light exactly like the precious stone from which it is named. The extraordinary shapes of Venetian glass are even more peculiar and artistic than its coloring.

In decorative fads we have happily outlived the use of bamboo portières, the Japanese fan and the everlasting tidy. Bamboo portières were only an oddity of the moment, not sufficiently beautiful to justify their permanent use; they were flimsy in construction and were neither a curtain nor a decoration. The Japanese fan was altogether too flimsy an article to afford lasting pleasure, and the tidy, born of the age of black hair cloth upholstery, has happily disappeared with that sleazy material. There is no objection to the use of a beautifully embroidered doiley for the dinner table, with an embroidered square for the epergne or table lamp, but the use of the tidy as a device to save the wear of upholstery savors too much of the furniture wrapper, which has long been used to deform whatever beauty the furniture possessed in the way of upholstery. Many women, through their love of dress, have the instinct to hide everything under a cloth, and cover the mantel with lambrequins and the carpet with crash, and the piano with a decorative jacket, as if it were made of pine boards, and unfit to be exhibited. Let us hope that the day of spreads, mats, lambrequins, scarfs and tidies that make rooms look stuffy and uninviting, is gone forever.

Both pictures and furniture should fall back flat against the wall as much as possible, leaving the greatest possible amount of space in the center of the room, so that the individuals who dwell in the apartment will be the real decoration, the furniture and minor furnishings forming a necessary, agreeable and artistic background. Every apartment should convey the feeling of use, rather than the idea that it is a room for the exhibition of furniture.